

**Amendments to the Claims:**

1-37. (Canceled)

38. (New) A method for detecting the expression of an envelope protein of a human endogenous retrovirus, characterized in that the protein is selected from the group consisting of an envelope protein encoded by the human endogenous retrovirus HERV-W and a protein encoded by an open reading frame located on the chromosome 7 of the human genome, said method comprising:

detecting a fusogenic power of said protein in cells of a cellular tissue or of a cell culture by observing formation of syncytia or an absence of formation of syncytia,

wherein said detection is made in the presence of at least one cell-surface receptor.

39. (New) The method as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the protein has a polypeptide sequence which exhibits at least 95% identity with the sequence SEQ ID NO: 1.

40. (New) The method as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the protein has a polypeptide sequence which consists of SEQ ID NO: 1.

41. (New) The method as claimed in claim 38, wherein the cells are selected from the group consisting of bone cells, muscle cells, placenta cells, endothelial cells, epithelial cells, glial cells and tumor cells or cells derived from tumor cell lines.

42. (New) The method as claimed in claim 41, wherein said cells are from blood vessels.

43. (New) The method as claimed in claim 38, wherein the cell-surface receptor is hATB.